Achieving a Violence-Free Alberta is Everybody's Business

Regional Workshop Guide & Workbook

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Message from the Premier

"We recognize that family violence and bullying are complex issues, and we hope the roundtable will help us get a firm understanding of the scope of the problem and propose concrete solutions to resolve it as much as possible."

Hon. Ralph Klein, Premier of Alberta

Message from the Honorary Chair

"While individual perspectives on violence may vary, one thing remains the same for us all. We all have an important role to play in stopping the violence that takes place everyday in homes, schools and communities around our province."

Colleen Klein, Honorary Chair,
Alberta Roundtable on
Family Violence and Bullying

Message from the Minister

"The Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying is about listening to Albertans and creating a plan for action. Our ministry is playing a co-ordinating role to bring community members to the table. Family violence and bullying affect everyone and we all have a part to play in creating a province that is violence-free and where everyone can be safe. Ideas from participants at the regional workshops will provide the foundation for an action plan for making that goal a reality."

Hon. Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services
Chair, Alberta Roundtable on
Family Violence and Bullying

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Violence affects all of us in one way or another. The effects are far reaching and extend from individual victims to our entire society. Family violence and bullying affect the victims' families who worry about the well-being and safety of one of their own. They affect friends or neighbours who may suspect something is happening but feel powerless to help. The impact is felt in schools where teachers are increasingly confronted with the effects on students who witness family violence at home or are victims of violence themselves. The effects are felt directly in the criminal justice system that must respond to incidents of family violence and bullying through both policing and the court system. Our overburdened health care system must deal with the serious physical and psychological injuries that result. Ultimately, family violence and bullying affect all citizens whose taxes must pay for the significant costs.

And the costs are substantial. The social and economic costs of family violence and bullying have been estimated at several billion dollars each year. Yet, it is the human costs that are most staggering. What's more, the impact of family violence and bullying does not end when the violence stops. Future generations, who must contend with the legacy of being raised in violent homes or of being bullied, are at high risk of repeating the cycle by becoming either victims or offenders themselves.

Although Alberta has made significant advances in legislation and has established a wide range of programs and services for victims and offenders, family violence and bullying continue to be serious problems. The recent tragic deaths in Alberta that have resulted from family violence and bullying have given rise to a renewed commitment by provincial and municipal governments along with community service providers and Alberta citizens to take action to ensure these tragic events are not repeated.

Premier Ralph Klein expressed this commitment in October 2003 when he announced that addressing family violence issues would be a top priority for the Alberta government. Alberta Children's Services Minister, Iris Evans, was asked to provide leadership for a Provincial Roundtable on Family Violence.

Family violence and bullying are complex problems with no fast and easy solutions. That doesn't mean, however, that important steps cannot be taken to vastly improve the situation if not eliminate family violence and bullying entirely over the longer term. The most effective approach is one that brings together the experiences, ideas and recommendations of all those involved or interested in preventing and responding to family violence and bullying and uses that wealth of ideas as a springboard for action.

This guide and workbook provides a common starting point for discussions about family violence and bullying at regional workshops across the province. It sets the context and raises important questions about what actions should be taken. The results from the regional workshops will provide the foundation for a provincial roundtable in May and will contribute directly to the ultimate goal: to help all Albertans live violence-free lives and to set the next generation free from the cycle of violence.

Goals and objectives

Given the scope of the issues and the wide range of individuals and agencies involved, the roundtable process is a comprehensive one starting with a series of focus groups and 13 regional workshops, culminating in an Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying in May 2004.

The goal is to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations for action, based on broad consultation with Albertans, that will form the cornerstone of a provincial strategy for the prevention of family violence and bullying. Specifically, the objectives of the roundtable process are to:

- Conduct an inclusive, province-wide consultation on solutions to build a coordinated, inclusive and collaborative response to family violence;
- Acknowledge and address the full spectrum of issues from primary prevention to forensic responses;
- Understand the need for and value of a coordinated and collaborative response to family violence and bullying; and
- Provide an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and the development of a shared vision for the elimination of family violence and bullying.

The roundtable process builds on a foundation of work that has already been done in Alberta and other jurisdictions including the Alberta Violence Review Project and the Task Force on Children at Risk. The process will engage a broad range of Albertans including victims of abuse, parents, youth, Aboriginal people, volunteers, faith communities, corporate sector representatives, community organizations and providers, sector experts, cross ministry partners, and interested citizens.

Starting with clear principles

The roundtable process is guided by the following principles:

Fundamental Principles:

- Respect for the inherent worth, dignity and equality of all people is fundamental in addressing family violence and bullying.
- Freedom from violence and abuse is a human right that applies to individuals, families, and communities.
- People must be empowered and supported to exert their basic right to personal safety.
- The social, psychological and fiscal consequences of family violence and bullying affect all Albertans, making these forms of violence a public concern and a primary responsibility of our society.

Principles for Action:

- Commitment to change in societal attitudes is critical for long-term solutions to family violence and bullying.
- Services to address family violence and bullying must be dedicated, first and foremost, to the protection and well-being of survivors, victims and children who have been exposed to these forms of violence.
- A collaborative and coordinated community response is essential to effectively address family violence and bullying
- Services must be designed and delivered at a community level in ways that reflect, respect and acknowledge the diversity and uniqueness of communities.

Purpose of the regional workshops

The regional workshops provide an opportunity for a diverse group of individuals and agencies to come together to discuss critical issues related to family violence and bullying and to propose solutions.

The result of the roundtable process will be an action report on family violence and bullying focused on strategies that can be used at the community and provincial levels. That report will provide the foundation for a new strategy for achieving the goal of a violence-free Alberta.

For more information about the roundtable process, please check the website at **www.familyviolenceroundtable.gov.ab.ca.**

PART I

Understanding family violence and bullying

The issues of family violence and bullying are priorities in Alberta because of their prevalence and consequences. They are the focus of this important provincial roundtable. Tragic incidents bring home for all of us, the reality that communities, governments and individual Albertans need to do more to prevent these forms of violence, and to respond to those impacted in cooperative and collaborative ways.

Both family violence and bullying find their roots in societal attitudes and environmental conditioning. Both reflect the complexity of changing learned attitudes and behaviours and our collective societal reluctance to confront the issues when they arise. Both forms of violence are unacceptable and destructive to social structures. They are driven by the psychological dynamics of power and control, and this paper talks more about these causes – and their effects – in the pages ahead.

Both family violence and bullying must be addressed at the earliest opportunities – solutions must focus on prevention, not just on intervention, protection and treatment options. A society that encourages and celebrates healthy relationships, that focuses on developing positive parenting skills and early childhood development, and that confronts the common factors that drive both bullying and family violence in a collaborative and culturally competent way through its community leaders, mass media, schools, faith communities and social agencies will be a society on the road to being violence free.

The following sections look more closely at distinct issues for family violence and bullying. Both issues are priorities for Alberta and it is important to understand not just the distinctions between the two, but also the common societal issues that connect them and other forms of violence in our society.

It's important to begin with some important facts about family violence and bullying and how it affects Albertans across the province. This section of the workbook provides some of the highlights of what we know about family violence and bullying in Alberta and across Canada. A glossary of the various terms used in this workbook is provided at Appendix A, while a list of references is provided at Appendix B. Information on how to obtain copies of the various reports and studies referred to in this guide and workbook can be found on the roundtable's website at *www.familyviolenceroundtable.gov.ab.ca*.

What is family violence?

Here's what we know family violence is not. It is not an inability to control anger. It is not a mental illness. It is not caused by alcohol or drug abuse, although these substances can contribute to family violence. Family violence is not a ***loss*** of control; rather, it is a choice by the abuser to use violence or the threat of violence to ***gain*** control over another person.

Family violence can best be described as a collection of actions and behaviours, both criminal and non-criminal, that have, as their motive the intent to control another person.

Some typical family violence behaviours – and the corresponding positive behaviours – are illustrated by the Power and Control Wheel*, shown in Diagram 1. The Power and Control Wheel was developed by battered women as part of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota and is often adapted to describe power imbalances and controlling behaviours for a variety of intimate partner relationship scenarios.

* Used with permission: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. See Appendix B for further information.

How common is family violence in Canada and Alberta?

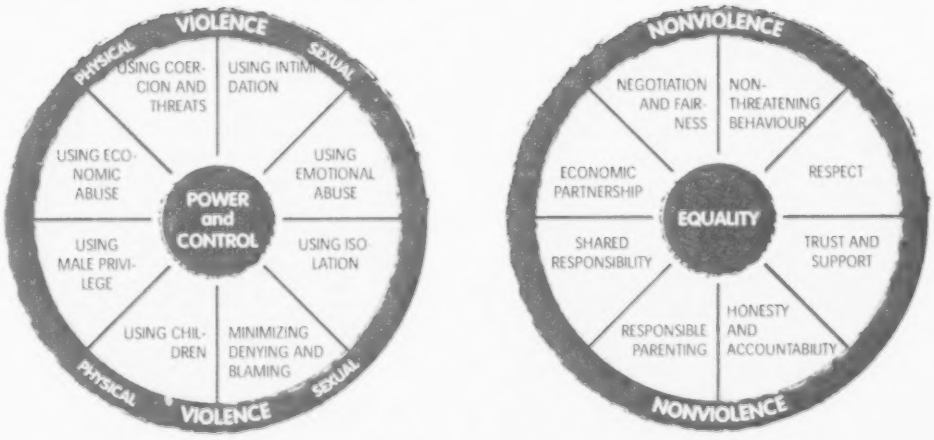
Unfortunately, the answer is that family violence is far too common. In Canada, one in every four violent crimes reported to police in 2001 involved cases of family violence (Statistics Canada, 2003a). In Alberta, 11 per cent of women and nine per cent of men were victims of spousal assault in 1999. In the landmark Canadian 1993 Violence Against Women Survey, almost one in every three women (30 per cent) reported being attacked by a spouse over their lifetime (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002).

While Alberta's rates of spousal assault against women have declined since 1993, we continue to have the highest rates in the country at 11 per cent compared to eight per cent for Canada as a whole (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002). In 2002/03, 6,122 spousal abuse incidents were reported to police in Alberta and 3,892 charges were laid. In this same time period, six women were killed by their partners or ex-partners (Alberta Solicitor General, 2002). Tragically, many more women have died under suspicious circumstances, often after a history of family violence.

Alberta's rates of spousal homicide are also significantly higher than the Canadian average. Between 1974 and 2000, an average of 10 women and three men were murdered each year by their spouses (Statistics Canada, 1999b). Sadly, many of the victims of spousal homicide sought help before the fatal event. Between 1991 and 2001, police were aware of a history of domestic violence between the accused and the victim in 59 per cent of all spousal homicide cases (Statistics Canada, 2003a). One study found that 44 per cent of women killed by their partners were seen in a hospital emergency department at least one year before they were killed (Wadman & Muelleman, 1999).

There is some evidence that the severity of partner assaults has diminished slightly since 1993. For example, the percentage of women who are most severely assaulted (including choking, beating and sexual assault) decreased from 50 per cent of all victims in 1993 to 43 per cent in 1999.

Power and Control Wheel



Courtesy: **Domestic Abuse Intervention Project**, 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802, 218-722-2781, www.duluth-model.org

Although the severity of attacks may be decreasing, it has not translated into a similar decrease in the use of emergency shelters by women and children. In Alberta, 5,601 women and 5,766 dependent children were sheltered in 30 provincially-funded shelters in 2002/03. That's an increase of eight per cent in women and four per cent in children compared to the previous year. During the same time period, 5,056 women and 5,517 children of abused women were not accommodated and had to be referred to other community-based services because shelters were full.

Why does family violence persist in our society?

To truly understand why family violence persists, we need to understand that acts of violence are the product of historical, social, economic and political beliefs and values that are built into the structure of our society. Family violence is reinforced when we deny, minimize and tolerate its existence, both in principle and in practice. Some of the most enduring Canadian institutions-including religious, judicial and political-have contributed to the problem, often without intending to do so, by not recognizing the issue or responding appropriately.

Although these institutions increasingly recognize family violence as the serious offence it is, there continues to be reluctance on the part of employers, health care workers, teachers and others who have regular contact with families to take action on family violence. Unlike suspected cases of child abuse, which require people to report their suspicions to authorities, there is no overt legal obligation or formal system that requires people to report other forms of family violence. Societal beliefs about the sanctity of the family and the right to privacy can stop people from taking action. Because the only course of action most people know is to call police, many people often choose to do nothing about family violence unless they view the situation as extreme.

Family violence is deeply rooted in the history of many societies. Until recently, the belief that a man had the right to "discipline" his wife by physical violence was widely held and is still tacitly approved in some communities. The potential for violence– particularly family violence – exists whenever members of a society do not enjoy equality, by virtue of their gender, race, sexual orientation, age or other factors.

Despite the many strides that have been made over the past few decades, traditional gender role stereotypes continue to influence beliefs about what men and women "can or can't do" (Tutty & Bradshaw, 2003). Early on, children learn what is expected of them as girls and boys and these notions are reinforced through family, schools, peers, popular media and other institutions. Girls tend to adopt nurturing, care-giving roles, while boys are expected to assume protector roles. As such, boys learn from an early age that aggression can enhance their ability to get what they want in the world. Despite some limits on their actions, boys generally get the message that they can expect a fair amount of latitude with respect to aggressive behaviours (Berman & Jiwani, 2002).

At a societal level, we may explicitly or implicitly contribute to family violence by accepting degrading depictions of girls and women in the media, by excusing acts of sexual harassment and assault, and by denying that women are being sexually exploited through prostitution (Tutty & Bradshaw, 2003). The same holds true when we suspect abuse and do nothing, when we allow the media to perpetuate negative beliefs about the role of girls and women in society, and when we assign blame to the victims.

The news is not all bad. Recent surveys indicate that the majority of Canadians believe that family violence is a serious issue (EKOS Research Associates Inc., 2001-2002 cited in Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002). Most Canadians know that spousal assault is a crime and believe that the perpetrator should be removed from the home.

It should be noted that most men do not engage in family violence or other types of violence. In fact, a number of men have come together to speak out against violence against women, children and other men. As one example, the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is an organization of "men working to end men's violence against women" (White Ribbon Campaign, 2004).

The impact of family violence on victims, abusers and society

The impact of family violence resonates across families, generations and communities. We are all affected by family violence in some way. Family violence has significant physical, psychological, social and economic consequences for children, youth and adults who experience violence within their families. These consequences often last a lifetime.

> ***"He destroyed my feeling of self-worth, self-confidence, even my motivation to survive. There were times I just wanted to die. It was like I can't fight anymore, just end it, and then I thought of my kids. My kids were the only thing. I wasn't worth fighting for in my mind. If he wanted to kill me, he could do it any time he wanted and that's one of the realities I have to live with every day of my life. If he wanted to kill my kids, he could do it any time and do you know what he'd get for it? Probably six years."***
>
> **- Victim of Family Violence**

The impact on individuals

Women are three times more likely than men to be physically injured by partners and five times more likely to receive medical attention or to be hospitalized as a result of the violence (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002). At least 40 per cent of women in violent relationships report some form of physical injury, compared with 13 per cent of men, while 15 per cent require medical attention as a result of the assault compared to three per cent of men (Statistics Canada, 2002). Women are also much more likely than men to take time off work because of the seriousness of their injuries and/or the threat to their safety or that of their children (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002).

Children who witness violence in the home face an increased risk of behavioural and developmental problems, as well as emotional disorders such as depression, fear or anxiety (Statistics Canada, 2000). These children often exhibit physical aggression and are at greater risk of becoming victims and perpetrators of family violence themselves.

> ***"He said, 'I'll kill you if you ever leave the property with my kids.' I told him, 'don't threaten me.' I said, 'If you have anything to say, you don't have to say it in front of the kids.' They were just babies and they were having a fit. He was fighting with me and the kids were right there and crying. They were scared. My oldest was running around just screaming, 'Leave mommy alone'."***
>
> **- Victim of Family Violence**

Since the mid-1990s, there has been an increase in the number of children taken into care by child welfare authorities (Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, 2003). The driving force behind this increase appears to be a growing number of child maltreatment reports that involve neglect and/or emotional maltreatment, including exposure to family violence.

The impact on society

In addition to the impact on individuals, family violence results in significant social and economic costs to health care systems, civil and criminal justice systems, housing and shelter services, community services and child welfare systems. In a 1995 study (Greaves, Hankivsky & Kingston-Riechers), the annual costs of violence against women in Canadian society were estimated at over $4.2 billion in social services, criminal justice, education, and health and medical costs, and in labour and employment losses. This figure underestimates the true cost of family violence to the public purse, given that the estimate was based on 1995 dollars and refers only to costs associated with violence against women.

> ***"It was just too frightening to ask for help, too scary to think of going to the police and saying that this guy has a weapon. You had to get to your own point where you were scared for your son before you even dreamt of doing it, and you did it, and it worked really well."***
>
> **- Victim of Family Violence**

Family violence affects every sector of society. Schools and teachers must use their limited resources to deal with the effects of family violence. In addition to the significant health care costs involved in treating the victims of family abuse, health workers are frequently called upon to act as advocates for victims of family violence. Employers must absorb the costs of lost productivity that result from family violence. And other public and private institutions, such as justice, emergency services and child and family services, are constantly called upon to deal with the consequences of this pervasive social problem*.

Although the financial costs are significant, the economics of this issue should not overshadow the human costs of family violence. Family violence is everybody's business, not because it costs money but because it costs people their health, well-being, safety and, in some tragic cases, their lives.

Who is affected by family violence?

In general, the most frequent victims of family violence are those who hold the least power and resources in society. While family violence crosses socioeconomic backgrounds, not all people are equally at risk. Factors such as gender, age, race, class, sexual orientation and disability can all contribute to vulnerability (Berman & Jiwani, 2002).

Women

One quarter of all violent crimes reported to a sample of police services in 2001 involved cases of family violence. Two-thirds of these cases were violence committed by a spouse or ex-spouse and 85 per cent of the victims were women. In Canada, 69 women were killed by their spouses in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003a).

* Victims of spousal violence are more likely to call on informal network of support than they are to use formal support agencies. According to the 1999 General Social Survey, during the five years preceding the survey, 81 per cent of male victims reported that they confided in someone close to them (Statistics Canada, 2003a).

Women are more likely than men to be victims of the most severe and frequent forms of spousal assault (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002). And women are twice as likely as men to report chronic, ongoing assaults (Statistics Canada, 2002). Front-line workers, such as the police, report responding to approximately ten times the number of calls for assaults by males against women partners compared to assaults by women against male partners (Tutty, 1999). Women are also more likely to experience more serious forms of abuse (Johnson & Pottie Bunge, 2001).

> ***"It began, verbally abusive, yelling, threatening. Then it became physical, pushing, choking, then, it became weapons. He, and this actually (was) the first time he was not living with me, he came over and (started) throwing me around, bouncing me off the walls, choking me.... The last assault he was very violent, hitting me, choking me, and then had a butcher knife that he held to my throat. And this went on and on for hours."***
>
> - Victim of Family Violence

In spite of these facts, one of the most prevalent and enduring myths about family violence is that the abuse is overstated; otherwise, women would choose to leave. The truth is that the obstacles to leaving an abusive relationship can be so formidable that the question, rather, becomes "how do women ever manage to leave?"

Some of these obstacles are put up by well-meaning family, friends and others who reinforce the notion that "marriage is forever" and that if a woman just "tried a little harder" she could make the abuse stop. Other barriers include fear of losing her children, lack of affordable housing, financial instability, and rejection by her community and/or family (Denham & Gillespie, 1994). In a survey conducted in 2003 by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, 45 per cent of women who returned to an abusive relationship did so for financial reasons. Furthermore, one survey showed that 20 per cent of women were abused by their partners during or following a separation (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993).

If the most frequent victims of family violence are those who hold the least power and resources in society, than there will inevitably be some populations more at risk.

Aboriginal* women are at particular risk for family violence. Multi-generational cycles of family violence, lower socio-economic status and limited educational attainment are realities for many aboriginal women. These factors create a number of significant barriers that further compound the power and resource imbalances that put them at greater risk of abuse and violence.

> ***"In my family, most of my sisters have been physically, emotionally, and sexually abused, and I was very determined that I wasn't going to go through this."***
>
> - Aboriginal Woman,
> Victim of Family Violence

* Aboriginal refers to the broad diversity of aboriginal people and communities in Alberta. Several characterisitics highlight this diversity, including location, language, political and socio-economics differences. It is critical to recognize these differences, as there is no one voice common to the entire Aboriginal population and no one solution to the family violence that will fit all communities.

The rate of spousal assault among aboriginal women is twice as high as the rate for aboriginal men and three times higher than that of non-aboriginal women and men (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002). Some studies show that as many as 80 per cent of aboriginal women have been abused by a partner (LaRocque, 1994).

While the reasons for these disproportionate numbers are complex, many attribute the current situation, at least in part, to the loss of culture, language and traditional family and community support systems. The status of women in aboriginal communities has been gradually eroded from the early roots of various aboriginal cultures where women were valued as equals and had the special role as the givers of life. Further, racism against aboriginals in the broader society has created feelings of self-hate and hate directed against others within their own communities, creating an environment where
family violence can flourish (LaRocque, 1994).

Although not embraced by all aboriginal people or communities, many aboriginal men and women are working to restore what they consider to be the natural balance between men and women. They are doing this through the teachings and guidance of their elders, and through a wholistic approach that addresses the interconnectedness of healing and abuse. This wholistic approach includes abusers, families, communities, government and social service providers in the solutions.

Immigrant and refugee women are also at greater risk for family violence. These women do not form a homogeneous group, as they come to Canada from many different countries, each with their own cultural norms, beliefs and practices.

> ***"I didn't know much. I was so surprised to find that a husband cannot have sex with his wife whenever he wants, that he can't rape her."***
>
> **- Immigrant woman, Victim of Family Violence**

Immigration factors can complicate the reality of spouse abuse. For example, many women, particularly refugee women, do not have a choice in the decision to move to Canada or to settle in a particular town or city. Others are "mail order" brides who have no family or friends in this country. Some women are trafficked into the country where they are sexually exploited through prostitution and related activities. Still others have only temporary status, such as live-in caregivers and women sponsored by their Canadian resident husbands. Others have been in Canada for many years but do not speak English or French.

Immigrant and refugee women who are battered share the same problems as non-immigrant women. But for these women, the problems are magnified many times by the loneliness, strangeness and newness of their environment (MacLeod & Shin, 1990). As the Calgary Coalition on Family Violence stated: "in addition to the factors which are associated with wife abuse in non-immigrant families, immigrant families experience linguistic and cultural isolation, changes in occupation and vocation, intergenerational conflict, culture shock, the unavailability of supportive relationships, the inversion of traditional family roles and the general crisis of adaptation" (Bhola & Nelson, 1990).

Immigrant women who are abused are often reluctant to contact police, out of fear of deportation or loss of their immigrant status (Miedema & Wachholz, 1998). Many also fear that intervention could result in greater isolation and economic insecurity and would bring shame to their families and community (MacLeod & Shin, 1990).

Isolation is also a factor that prevents ***women in rural and remote communities*** in Alberta from getting help when they are victims of family violence. A lack of resources in their home communities and long distances to services in other communities make it difficult to access services. Women in agricultural areas are often reluctant to leave or to seek assistance because of the demands of farm life, where animal care and, ultimately, family economics requires them to stay.

> ***"I would get a lot of emotional abuse from my husband. He would say, 'I am your husband not your slave. Hire somebody or get home care.' There was sexual abuse going on in the relationship as well. I knew that I had to get out but I had no way of getting out. I had no money. I had no income. I had no transportation."***
>
> **- Woman with a Disability and Victim of Family Abuuse,**
> ***(From: Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities.)***

Women with disabilities also face a higher risk of victimization from family violence and other forms of violence (Sobsey, 1994). Studies have found that women with disabilities and deaf women are at least one-and-a half to two times more likely than non-disabled women to experience abuse by their spouse/partner, caregivers, neighbours, service providers and family members (Canadian Health Network, 2003).

Women who are dependent on a spouse or partner for personal support may feel they have no other options than to remain in a relationship even if it means being physically or emotionally abused (Odette & Ronaldi, 2003). Even when a woman with disabilities decides to leave an abusive relationship, the process may be slower than for other women because of the need for specialized housing, attendant care and/or interpreters (Odette & Ronaldi, 2003). Most of the services available to victims of spousal assault have been set up to respond to the needs of the non-disabled population and simply do not have the capacity to meet the full range of needs of women with disabilities.

Girls and young women who are exploited by prostitution are frequently victims of family violence. Many of these girls and young women entered prostitution before their 15th birthday and most have a background of physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect by parents (McIntyre, 2002). In one study, 30 out of 33 girls and young women who were exploited by prostitution reported that they had been physically or sexually abused as children (Nixon, et al., 2002). The sexual exploitation of young children and adolescents through child pornography is an increasing concern. The Internet has created a rapidly growing market for child pornography, prostitution and child trafficking. Police forces and social support agencies across the globe are working to combat this escalating problem.

> ***"I'd been molested all my life. I couldn't remember a day when I wasn't black and blue, so she (another group home resident) showed me a way I could make money (through prostitution)."***
>
> **- Victim of Family Violence**

Children and Adolescents

Children and adolescents are affected by family violence, both as victims of abuse or neglect and through exposure to parental violence. Most professionals agree that child abuse is vastly underreported (Latimer, 1998). Researchers and practitioners estimate that child maltreatment or other symptoms of serious family problems affect 20 to 40 per cent of all Canadian families (Webber, 1991).

Although children under the age of 18 represent just 21 per cent of the population in Canada, they are victims in over 60 per cent of all sexual offences and 20 per cent of all physical assaults reported to police (Statistics Canada, 2003a). In almost one-third of sexual offences and 21 per cent of physical assaults against children and youth, the accused was a family member, most often a parent (Statistics Canada, 2003a).

In 1999, children in almost half a million Canadian households heard or saw one parent assaulting another in the previous five years (Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001). In 70 per cent of these cases, the assaults were perpetrated by fathers on mothers and, in most instances, the mother feared for her life. The children, themselves, were harmed or threatened in 10 per cent of these cases. Children who are exposed to these events are at increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence themselves.

Unfortunately for many children, exposure to family violence does not end when the parents separate. Child custody decisions that are weighted in favour of the parents' right of access to the child without due respect for the risks involved can lead to disastrous consequences for the individuals leaving abusive relationships and their children.

While there often are warning signs that abused women and their children may be at risk, those who are in position to help sometimes minimize the warning signals. These "red flags" include specific threats to harm the children, an extended murder/suicide fantasy with respect to the family, and threats to abduct the children. In the majority of cases, someone in close contact with the family had knowledge about the imminent danger. Their decision not to intervene has, in many instances, translated into a death sentence for the abused spouse and her children (Jaffe, Lemon & Poisson, 2003).

Ensuring that family violence issues are appropriately addressed when determining what is in the best interests of the child is a major concern for both the public and the current family law system. Provincial and territorial legislation varies in the extent to which it deals with this issue. The current system has been criticized for over-emphasizing contact, sometimes with significant risk to the child (Paetsch, Bertrand & Hornick, 2001a; Paetsch, Bertrand & Hornick, 2001b).

Despite the risks to themselves, many women who leave abusive relationships want their children to have positive relationships with their fathers – providing safety needs can be addressed. In a two-year study with 62 women and 95 children (Jaffe, Zerwer & Poisson, 2003), most women said they saw positive qualities in their ex-partner and wanted some plan that would allow their children to maintain regular contact. These women also reported that they often return to abusive relationships to avoid disrupting their children's lives and to ensure financial security and adequate housing for their families.

Men

As children, boys have a similar risk as do girls of being exposed to family violence or being victims of physical assault by parents. Girls are more likely to be victims of family-related sexual assaults but one in five of these assaults are committed against boys (Statistics Canada, 1999a).

> ***"The second time, she was under pressure from going to school but she took it out on me. She kicked the heel out of a laundry hamper, and then she came over to where I was standing and said, 'You've been a pain in the ass for the last three weeks, you haven't done anything right, you aren't helping around here, you're not doing anything.' She slugged me in the ribs and I went down. I hit the ground – she hit me that hard. I think I had bruised ribs or maybe even cracked ribs."***
>
> **- Male Victim of Family Violence**

"When we give a message to boys and young men in any shape or form that their experience of violence and victimization is less important than that of girls and young women, we are teaching them a lesson about their value as persons. We also teach them that the use of violence towards males is legitimate. When we dismiss their pain, we do little to encourage boys and men to listen to, and take seriously, women's concerns about violence and victimization. When we diminish their experiences or fail to hold their male and female abusers fully accountable, we support their continued victimization" (Health Canada, 1996).

In 1995 and 1996, the rate of male victims of spousal violence in the Canadian population remained constant at 37 per 100,000 men, 15 and older (Statistics Canada, 2003a). From 1996 to 2000, the rate almost doubled to 64 male victims per 100,000 and stayed relatively unchanged at 62 per 100,000 in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003a).

Generally speaking, younger people are at greater risk of experiencing spousal violence than are older people. Men between the age of 25 to 34 reported higher rates of violence (4 per cent) than their older counterparts (1 per cent) (Statistics Canada, 2000). -
Men in common-law relationships may be somewhat more likely than married men to be abused by their partners. In the 1999 General Social Survey, four per cent of men living in common-law relationships reported being abused by their female partners, compare to just one per cent of married men. *A Profile of Criminal Victimization: Results of the 1999 General Social Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.* A 1986 survey of 562 couples in Calgary also showed that men in common-law relationships were more than twice as likely to report physical abuse by a partner than were their married counterparts *(Brinkerhoff, M., & Lupri, E. (1988), "Interspousal Violence" Canadian Journal of Sociology, 13(4), 407-434).*

"It is essential to encourage abused men who need services to request such support. Only in this way will professionals become sensitized to the difficulties faced by men and develop services for men who have been abused by women partners, if these are needed. More research on the experiences of abused men is essential to estimate the extent and severity of the problem. The little research conducted to date raises more questions than it answers (Tutty, 1999).

Older Adults

By 2026, close to eight million people in Canada (21 per cent of the population) will be 65 years of age or older (Statistics Canada, 2001). This aging of our population will have a number of implications, including an increase in the number of adults who care for elderly relatives.

Most older adults enjoy positive relationships with their families and significant others. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness that many older Canadians suffer abuse in several forms. As the stress of caring for elderly relatives increases, we may see an increase in the incidence of abuse against older adults (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2003).

Abuse of older adults has been identified as a significant social problem by both those working in the field of aging and those working in the area of family violence. It is a complex problem that involves health care, social and legal issues. Yet, it has traditionally been overshadowed by other forms of family violence.

In addition to spousal assault, older adults are at risk of abuse by family members and other caregivers. According to one recent study, at least seven per cent of seniors experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child, caregiver or spouse (Statistics Canada, 1999a). The Edmonton Seniors' Safe Housing program reported that 36 older adults were accommodated between November 2002 and October 2003. In half of these cases, the alleged abuser was identified as a family member or caregiver while, in the other half, the abuser was identified as a spouse. Most victims reported emotional abuse, followed by physical abuse, financial abuse, neglect, threats of physical harm, and sexual abuse.

Abuse of older adults by family members, as with other types of abuse, cuts across all income levels, marital status and ethnicity. Those most at risk appear to be older adults who live with someone, rather than alone, and older adults who live with grown children or other caregivers, rather than with a spouse (Swanson, 1998).

For a number of reasons including fear for personal or financial security, fear of stigma and loss of social support networks, older adults may be reluctant to report abuse by family members. In Alberta, there is a legislated requirement to report elder abuse when it occurs in a seniors' care facility but not in the home. Community members such as pharmacists and other health care providers, bank tellers and retail staff are often the first to notice signs of senior abuse. However, these individuals may be reluctant to get involved or may be concerned about potentially alienating their patients/customers if they are mistaken.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered

Violence in same-sex relationships often remains hidden in the same way spousal abuse was kept "in the family" for many years. This happens for a variety of reasons including homophobia (individual and systemic prejudice against homosexuality), heterosexism (the assumption of heterosexuality can isolate same-sex couples, making them invisible to the system) and an unwillingness to believe that women could hurt their female partners or that men could hurt their male partners (METRAC, 2003).

Between one-quarter and one-third of all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals experience domestic violence (Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, 2001). According to the same study, individuals who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered are also more likely to be the victims of hate crimes ranging from verbal abuse to outright physical assault.

Parents/Caregivers

Although parent abuse and neglect of children is well documented, abuse of parents by their teenage children is a rarely acknowledged form of family violence (Cottrell, 2000). Normal parent-child interactions include episodes of defiance and resistance. However, conflict becomes abuse when the teenage child uses threats, force or manipulation to gain power over his or her parents.

As in other forms of family violence, there is no typical abused parent and the reasons for parent abuse can range from changing family structures and lack of parental control to sex-role stereotyping and abuse of alcohol or drugs. Boys and girls are both capable of abusing their parents but some studies suggest that adolescent boys are more likely to be abusers than are girls (Cottrell, 2000). The consequences of parent abuse can be devastating for families, including feelings of despair and isolation, strained relations between the parents, loss of trust between parent and child, and stress and related health problems (Cottrell, 2000).

Grandparents and Other Family Members

Grandparents and other family members are often caught in the dynamics of family violence and, in some cases, left to deal with the consequences. For example, parents of a perpetrator may lose access to their grandchildren. Family members of a victim might be threatened, hurt or, in some cases, killed by the abuser. And, in tragic cases where a spouse dies at the hands of a current or ex-partner, other family members must struggle to make sense of the tragedy.

Abusers

Perpetrators of family violence are not a homogenous group and the reasons for the abuse are complex. Some abusers have faced a legacy of abuse in their own families. In a study conducted by the Correctional Service of Canada, almost half of the offenders had been victims of child abuse (Cyr, 1994).

Men who are abusers vary in terms of class, age, language, culture, ethnicity, literacy and education (Tyagi, 1998). At least one-quarter of the men who physically abuse their partners also physically abuse their children (Bala, et.al., 1998).

The forms of family violence are too widespread to be explained by mental illness. The systematic and controlled nature of family violence is not consistent with the characteristics of mental illnesses that involve violent outbursts (Denham & Gillespie, 1994).

Abuse of intimate partners is also not caused by addictions to drugs or alcohol. These substances may lower inhibitions to act out but they do not cause a person to abuse. However, abusers often use the impairment that results to excuse their violent behaviour.

In terms of treatment, new and unique programs continue to emerge. Successful outcomes for these programs usually include: 1) the abuser coming to an understanding of how his abuse has harmed his partner; 2) the abuser taking responsibility for his abusive and controlling behaviour without minimizing or denying that it happened; and 3) the abuser being able to firmly situate his abusive behaviour within the context of power and control, and not within the context of anger (Education Wife Assault, 1998). Eliminating the array of abusive behaviours involves a long term, concerted effort on the part of the abuser.

In recent years, the tragic events at Columbine High School and the shooting of Jason Lang in Taber, Alberta have brought the issue of youth violence – and bullying, in particular – to the forefront of social consciousness. A violence-free Alberta will require a concerted effort to prevent family violence. But it will be equally important to care for, support and mentor our youngest citizens, so they, in turn, will respect and care for each other, their schools and their communities.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a repeated pattern of unprovoked, aggressive behaviours by a person or group that are carried out to harm or control another person. Like family violence, bullying is a direct abuse of power that can lead to feelings of isolation, insecurity and terror in the victim. Bullying can be physical and/or emotional and may include some or all of these behaviours:

- Name calling
- Teasing or putdowns
- Social isolation
- Physical intimidation or assault
- Extortion
- Oral or written threats
- False accusations
- Cruel rumours

Bullying changes as children get older. Bullying by younger children usually involves pushing, shoving, name-calling, teasing and social isolation. Bullying by teenagers may include sexual harassment, gang attacks and dating violence. When they reach adulthood, bullying behaviour may turn into assaults, family violence and senior abuse (Public and Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick, 2001).

How common is bullying?

According to Family Services Canada, approximately 12 per cent of children are bullies. Different studies put the rate of bullying between a low of five per cent to a high of 27 per cent of students in Grade 4 to 6 who report victimization by bullies (O'Connell, et al., 1997; Olweus, 1999; Smith, 1999). For students who report bullying others, the rate ranges from six to 17 per cent (Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). In their observations of school-aged children, Craig and Pepler (1997) found that bullying occurs once every seven minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom.

Why does bullying persist in our society?

The popular media in Canada – including television, movies, music and video games – has contributed to a society that not only tolerates aggression but also sees it as an effective solution to personal and social problems. There is evidence that aggressive children are more likely to imitate media violence than are non-aggressive children (Huesmann, Lagerspetz & Eron, 1984).

Peers also contribute to the persistence of bullying. At least 85 per cent of bullying episodes occur in a peer group (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Peers tend to give positive attention to the bully rather than the victim, which may reinforce the bully's power over the victim. Although 83 per cent of students in a 1997 study said they feel uncomfortable watching bullying (Pepler et.al., 1997), most are reluctant to intervene. In playground episodes, peers intervened in just 11 per cent of bullying episodes (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Other factors that can play a role in aggressive behaviour in children include family type, socio-economic status and parenting practices (Statistics Canada, 2003b). A recent study reinforced evidence that young children who witness violence in the home are more likely than other children to be overtly aggressive in later childhood. Signs of overt aggression include fighting, getting angry, making threats and bullying (Statistics Canada, 2003b). In 1994/95, approximately 43 per cent of boys and 27 per cent of girls who reported witnessing violence at home were overtly aggressive, compared to 25 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls who had not witnessed violence.

The impact of bullying on victims, abusers and society

Bullying is not a normal part of growing up or of "kids being kids." Being bullied can make children feel frightened, sick, lonely and unhappy (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, 2004). Children who are victimized often report low self-esteem (Besag, 1989) and symptoms of depression (Slee, 1995) and anxiety (Neary & Joseph, 1994; Slee, 1995). Children who are bullied may try to avoid school or other social interaction to escape the bullying. In extreme cases, some victims of bullying may attempt or commit suicide (Olweus, 1993). Even when children are not driven to suicide, the victims of bullying experience significant psychological harm that can interfere with their social, academic and emotional development (Sudermann, Jaffe & Schieck, 1996).

Bullies also experience serious long-term consequences. They tend to become aggressive adults who, on average, are more likely to be convicted of multiple criminal offences (Olweus, 1979). Their victims, on the other hand, are more likely to have made a positive social adjustment by the time they reach their early 20s, although victims of bullying are more likely to suffer from depression and low self-esteem than individuals who were not bullied as children (Olweus, 1993).

Who is affected by bullying?

Victims

Despite the popular stereotype that victims of bullies have unusual physical traits, research does not support this belief (Olweus, 1991). Anyone can be the victim of a bully, but some children seem to be victimized more than others. In general, children who become victims of bullying tend to be shy and quiet, lack friends and social support at school and are often not confident in their physical abilities and strength (Suderman, Jaffe & Schieck, 1996). Because these children generally do not retaliate when they are picked on, they come to be seen as safe targets for bullying.

Bullies

As with family violence, there is no typical bully. Children who bully are often raised in homes where they receive little attention or warmth. This lack of human contact, together with poor supervision and the modeling of aggressive behaviour in the home provide the perfect setting for bullying behaviours to develop (Loeber & Stoughamer-Loeber, 1986; Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1989; Olweus, 1993).

Boys and girls are equally likely to be involved in bullying, although they express bullying in different ways. Boys are more likely to use more physical forms of bullying, while girls use indirect forms of bullying, such as gossiping and excluding (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Between the ages of four and 10, bullying is usually confined to same-sex peers but it expands to opposite sex peers after age 10 (Pepler, et.al., 1997). A study on the prevalence of bullying among school-aged children found that children 11 to 12 years of age were more likely to report that they had bullied others than were either older or younger children (Pepler et.al., 1997).

Bullies tend to be hyperactive, disruptive and impulsive (Olweus, 1987). They have little empathy for their victims and show little or no remorse for their behaviour. Bullies are generally aggressive towards most people in their lives including peers, teachers, parents, siblings and others. Boys who bully tend to be physically stronger than their peers and have a need to dominate others. Studies indicate that childhood bullies are more likely to develop antisocial behaviours as they enter adulthood (Farrington, 1993) and that 30 to 40 per cent of children with aggression problems grow up to have problems with violence as adults (Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick, 2001).

Other Children

All children, including bystanders, are negatively affected by bullying (Sudermann, Jaffe & Schieck, 1996). In a bullying situation, bystanders may experience anxiety or fear. Their learning and social environment can be poisoned by bullying, if there are no effective interventions. And children who witness bullying and see no negative consequences for the bully may be more likely to use aggression in the future to solve their own problems.

What can we conclude from this information?

Certainly, we can conclude that the problem is widespread and its impact is serious. In terms of family violence, the question is not so much 'who is affected by family violence?' as 'who is not affected by family violence?' Women, men, children, older adults, parents and caregivers, grandparents – there is no definable group that is exempt from its devastating consequences or long-term effects. In terms of bullying, it happens far too often, too many children's lives are affected by it and the children and youth who bully others too often grow up to be violent and aggressive adults.

Family violence and bullying are everybody's business. So, what are we-all Albertans-going to do about it?

PART II

What is being done today to address family violence and bullying?

In Alberta, there are already a number of programs and services in place but more remains to be done to improve our prevention efforts and response to family violence and bullying. Research suggests that much can be gained by taking a co-ordinated and collaborative approach, ensuring that the various programs and agencies work together to share information and expertise and take concerted actions to address the problem. The following section provides a snapshot of the current role of provincial partners and some examples of what is already being done to develop a collaborative and co-ordinated response to address family violence and bullying in Alberta.

What is already being done?

Not-for-Profit Organizations

Not-for-profit organizations across Alberta develop, support and deliver essential community-based services to prevent and respond to family violence and bullying. These organizations play varying roles depending on the readiness, needs and capacities of the communities they serve.

The many not-for-profit programs and services doing good work in the community are too numerous to list in this document, however, they span the full range of not-for-profit services from primary prevention initiatives with parents, children and youth to treatment and follow-up services for victims and offenders. Foundations, institutes, corporations, governments and academic institutions are frequent partners with the not-for-profit service sector. The common thread in all of the approaches is that the programs are initiated, developed and delivered based on the unique strengths and needs of the community and/or the targeted populations they choose to serve. The not-for-profit service sector is essential in the provincial response to those impacted by family violence and bullying.

Alberta volunteers are making a difference in their own communities and across the globe as leaders in violence prevention. Nationally, *www.bullying.org* is an award-winning, non-profit Internet resource created in Alberta and maintained by dedicated volunteers who are doing their part to prevent and respond to the issue of bullying.

The HomeFront Project is an example of what can happen when not-for-profit and public sectors work together for change. When a case comes to the attention of this "domestic violence court", it looks at the specific dynamics and needs of families impacted by family violence. Then it puts appropriate treatment and interventions in place for all members of the family, including treatment for the offender to reduce the recidivism so prevalent in the cycle of family violence. HomeFront recognizes community awareness and public education as key success factors in the prevention and reduction of family violence. This program is an active partnership between all levels of government, corporations, volunteers and not-for-profit and government service providers. A full description of the HomeFront program and a recently completed evaluation is available through their homepage link on the roundtable website.

The police response to domestic violence is critical to the safety and security of all family members. Not-for-profit victims services organizations have been established in rural and urban communities across Alberta and work hand in hand with RCMP and municipal police jurisdictions to assist victims of crime. Volunteer victim advocates often respond with police to support victims of family and youth violence and accompany them to subsequent court proceedings when the support is needed. In addition, many of these organizations actively participate in the development of community-based crime prevention initiatives and information and referral services in communities.

Forty three (43) not-for-profit organizations operate women's shelters in Alberta, providing emergency and transitional accommodation, crisis intervention, referrals, advocacy and safety planning information. Women and children who cannot be accommodated may be referred to other community-based family violence prevention/intervention services and emergency social services for assistance.

In addition to providing emergency accommodation, Alberta shelters assisted 38,423 callers on crisis lines in 2002/03 and made 12,371 outreach contacts with people who needed help because of family violence but were not admitted to shelters. Shelter staff and trained volunteers delivered 1,751 public education presentations on family violence in 2002/03 and provided in-house programs and services at shelters to 11,897 community members.

Sexual violence and abuse are difficult issues to talk about. It is historically shrouded in a silence born of shame and humiliation. Ten sexual assault centres across Alberta are working together with other family violence partners to develop and enhance partnership, public awareness, education and intervention strategies to prevent and respond to sexual violence in families. In addition to working with families, sexual assault centres offer programs and supports to people victimized by sexual violence and assault outside of the family unit. These are just four examples of the critical contributions not-for-profit organizations make to a collaborative and co-ordinated community response.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of the vast network of individuals who freely give their time, expertise and experience to support important services, programs and supports in their communities. The volunteer sector is playing an increasingly important role in the prevention of and response to family violence and bullying issues.

With this enhanced role comes a need for agencies and organizations to provide training, support and recognition for these important people. Foundations, all levels of government and not-for-profit agencies have worked together in many communities to make training and development opportunities available. Volunteers act in a variety of capacities in support of the community response to family violence and bullying. They often serve as board or committee members, fundraisers, victim advocates, trainers, peer support or group leaders, child care providers, drivers, tradespeople and administrative support.

Parents, minor sport organizations and other community group volunteers across Alberta are involved in initiatives to prevent aggression and bullying. These initiatives encourage positive role modeling and respectful behaviours in school and community. Many communities have developed policies, protocols and rules of conduct to assure the safety and well-being of children and youth and to encourage positive participation by parents and other adults in the community.

The Faith and Multi-Cultural Community

In our multicultural society, faith and culture are profoundly connected. Faith and multi-cultural communities are playing an important role in addressing family violence. They are uniquely placed to make a significant difference.

Multi-cultural organizations across Alberta develop and deliver culturally competent programs and services for new Canadians and Canadian citizens with a variety of cultural backgrounds and experiences. These organizations play a key role in addressing the unique, multiple barriers for children, youth and families in need of support or service.
In addition to direct support to those impacted by family violence and bullying, they offer assistance to other program and service providers through public education, training and translation services.

Faith communities across Alberta offer direct support and counselling to their members who are impacted by family violence and bullying. In addition, many of these faith communities reach out to those in need within the greater community and have developed social programs and supports to prevent and respond to a variety of serious social issues. In Calgary, a partnership between the multi-faith communities and family violence prevention and response agencies has been established through the FaithLink Committee. FaithLink has developed protocols and resource materials, organized training workshops and developed a local database of all faith communities in Calgary. These materials were shared with Albertans in November 2003 during Family Violence Awareness Month for use in other communities. They are available through the Office of the Prevention of Family Violence link on the roundtable website.

Corporate Community

Corporations and local businesses have a long history of supporting and partnering with communities to prevent and respond to family violence. The most visible form of this support is the financial and in-kind contributions that are made to community-based programs and sponsorship activities, including supporting special events, conferences and fund raising campaigns.

Many corporations go further by lending the specialized skills and expertise of their employees to build capacity in voluntary groups and organizations. In other cases, businesses that understand how family violence can impact their employees' well-being and workforce performance have implemented workplace policies, protocols, training and employee assistance programs to prevent and respond to family violence.

Local Governance

Local and provincial governments work together through various legislative and partnership agreements. Local governments and regional authorities have an important role to play in supporting the provincial response to family violence and bullying, due to the implications for social services, schools, health services, policing, housing and transportation. Local governance structures such as municipal/Metis Settlement councils; school boards; and regional authorities; such as Child and Family Services and regional health authorities are in a good position to engage community partners, set relevant and realistic priorities and make decisions on the most effective use of available resources.

An example that demonstrates local decision making and provincial government partnership is the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) partnership. Under the *Family and Community Support Services Act and Regulation*, municipalities and Metis Settlements can enter into an 80 per cent province and 20 per cent municipal funding agreement to design and deliver locally determined, preventive social programs that promote and enhance well-being among individuals, families and communities. This important partnership supports a number of locally-driven prevention initiatives to address family violence and bullying, in communities large and small.

Office for the Prevention of Family Violence

The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (OPFV) was established in 1984. Its purpose is to provide support and leadership for a co-ordinated, province-wide government response to family violence. The office also distributes educational materials, develops government policies, and funds women's shelters and prevention projects. The OPFV was the first of its kind in Canada. In 1990, the United Nations commended Alberta for its progress in addressing family violence through the efforts of this office.

Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence

The Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence (ICFV) was also established in 1984 by the Government of Alberta to ensure a cross-government approach to family violence and to increase the scope and magnitude of family violence efforts. Chaired by the OPFV, the ICFV involves nine Alberta ministries: Justice, Children's Services, Community Development, Solicitor General, Learning, Human Resources and Employment, Health and Wellness, Seniors, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

In 1992, the Alberta Government endorsed the *Framework for Action on Family Violence* developed by the Interdepartmental Committee. The framework was based on two key principles: 1) all Albertans should have access to information about family violence and a range of service options to address their needs; and 2) initiatives should be designed to promote an appropriate level of self-determination. This framework continues to guide the work of the Interdepartmental Committee.

Regional workshop participants will be provided with a comprehensive summary of the current cross-government, family violence initiatives and community-based programs, services and partnerships in the partnering ministries. Additional copies are available on the roundtable website.

Alberta Children and Youth Initiative

Addressing the issues facing our young people poses a huge challenge for families, communities and government. This is a challenge we simply can't afford to back away from. Children and youth who are healthy, well cared for and educated grow up to be active, community-minded and contributing adults.

The services that children, youth and families need are varied and are provided by multiple departments, authorities and community-based organizations. Delivering them in an integrated and effective way means taking a collaborative approach that spans government and actively engages our stakeholders and partners. This is the role of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI). The initiative brings together eight government ministries and two partnering agencies that deliver services for children and youth. ACYI provides a much-needed common focus and allows government to better co-ordinate its resources, expertise and connections to support the community.

The ACYI partnering ministries have made bullying a priority for action. They are working together to address bullying and youth violence within the Framework for Action on Family Violence. These efforts include:

- Identifying current best practices in prevention and program initiatives to address the issue of bullying; and
- Identifying ways and means to co-ordinate and build on the effective programs and services across Alberta to prevent and respond to the issues surrounding bullying and youth violence.

Provincial Task Force on Children at Risk

Following the 1999 shooting and killing of a student in a high school in Taber, Alberta, the Premier established a Task Force on Children at Risk. Chaired by Minister Evans, the Task Force's final report, *Start Young Start Now*, included a recommendation to "take steps to prevent and protect children and youth from abuse, violence, bullying and gang activities." This recommendation addressed the need to coordinate and expand successful strategies for reducing bullying, violence and gang-related activities in schools and communities. Although a number of initiatives have been implemented as a result of the Task Force, this roundtable process provides an opportunity to further address this important issue and to build on effective practices.

Prevention is the key to creating change on the bullying issue, according to the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC). NCPC says, "If students are taught how to intervene appropriately or get adult assistance, and to empathize with victims and condemn aggression, bullying can be reduced."

The Task Force on Children at Risk served as a catalyst for partnerships to develop community -based programs and services to prevent and address bullying. The *Safe and Caring Schools* initiative was established with a goal to emulate this philosophy in every school and community across Alberta. This comprehensive initiative recognizes that successful outcomes hinge on community ownership, parent involvement and youth driven approaches. The momentum created by the Task Force is maintained through the Uniting For Children forum held every two years. This forum engages a broad range of Albertans in efforts to support a better future for children and youth. Participants learn about effective and innovative approaches and recommend joint strategies that can make a difference for children and youth across Alberta.

A Youth Advisory Panel was also established to ensure youth viewpoints could find their way into the policies of government. This group of Alberta youth, led by an appointed MLA, works with Alberta Children's Services, and the Children's Advocate to organize and facilitate regional forums to give a voice to youth issues and recommendations from across the province.

Alberta's Family Violence Review Project

In June 2002, Honourable Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services, approved the establishment of a Family Violence Review Project team lead by Judge Walder White and William Hurlburt, Q.C. The central focus of the project was twofold: to review Alberta's current legislation and policy for prevention of family violence; and to ensure that services to women and children are comprehensive and of the highest standard.

Following the development of a working paper and community stakeholder information sessions, the final discussion paper, *A Coherent and Principled Response to Family Violence in Alberta: Recommendations for Change and Action*, was submitted to the minister on Nov. 1, 2003.

Overall, the Family Violence Review Project identified the need for:

- A co-ordinated provincial response to family violence;
- An inclusive provincial structure to address family violence issues;
- A comprehensive service delivery model from prevention to protection; and
- Sustainable, outcome-based funding and evaluation.

The discussion paper identifies a number of effective and innovative community-based programs and partnerships that are currently addressing the issue of family violence in Alberta through a collaborative and coordinated response. This discussion paper will be made available to all regional workshop participants and is available on the roundtable's website.

Unified Family Court and Family Law Review

A Family Violence Advisory Sub-Committee was established by the Chair of the Unified Family Court Implementation Steering Committee. The mandate of this sub-committee is to advise on how best to meet the needs of those impacted by family violence who may come into contact with the Unified Family Court and what programs and services may be needed.

Following the introduction of Bill 45, the *Family Law Act*, Albertans were asked for their input on many important issues, including parenting orders (formerly custody and access). The Bill includes a provision to take into account the existence of family violence as one of the circumstances a court must consider in determining what is in the best interests of a child when making orders that impact the child. This input has been received by Alberta Justice and is currently being reviewed together with other issues.

Towards a more co-ordinated and collaborative approach

At the provincial level and in communities across the province, many programs, services and initiatives are underway. However, experience suggests that these initiatives often operate in isolation from each other. Like a puzzle, the complete picture is often not clear without the work needed to put the pieces in place. Some pieces are easy and are successfully placed on the first attempt; some require more effort before we get it right.

Best practice research supports the need for a co-ordinated, inclusive and effective approach to address pervasive social issues such as family violence and bullying. There is no single program or service that will prevent the violence and abuse or mitigate the consequences for all victims and their families. However, evidence suggests that some tragedies might be avoided if service providers listen to each other, share information more freely and recognize the respective roles of mandated community supports. What is needed is a collaborative and co-ordinated response that covers the continuum of required services, from prevention and intervention through protection, outreach and follow-up.

Aboriginal communities often describe a wholistic healing approach and the importance of engaging families, communities, service providers, governments and abusers in the solutions and healing process. This is the essence of a collaborative and co-ordinated community response. Such a response looks at the whole picture and the interrelationships among all those who are impacted by the family violence and bullying behaviours.

Examples of a co-ordinated approach include a five-year implementation plan developed by the Joint Committee on Domestic Violence in Ontario (1999). The plan identifies 16 critical strategies in four main categories: 1) essential community services, 2) effective justice system response, 3) achieving seamlessness, and 4) funding and planning priorities. The London Civil Court in London, Ontario is viewed as a best practice relative to a collaborative and co-ordinated approach. The London Civil Court continues to implement incremental change through awareness training and community collaboration strategies. A link to the London Civil Court is available on the roundtable website. In Alberta, *A Coherent and Principled Response to Family Violence in Alberta: Recommendations for Action and Change* (Hurlburt & White, 2003) recommends a similar approach.

Examples of collaborations and co-ordinated approaches are in place across Alberta both in urban and rural settings. "KARE – Kindness and Respect for Everyone" is an anti-bullying program in Slave Lake. The program has brought together community partners such as Family and Community Support Services, schools, Child and Family Services Authority, mental health, the regional health authority, parents, the RCMP, the town and county, and local community organizations to address the issue of bullying. Since the program's implementation in 2002, activities have included:

- Visits from well-known experts to speak on the issue of bullying;
- A public harassment by-law;
- A survey with local schools and students to identify the extent in which bullying is an issue; and
- Family violence conferences held within the area now include bullying as a key issue.

Alberta already has completed some groundbreaking work that can serve as solid examples for other partnerships and jurisdictions. In many communities, domestic violence response teams pair child welfare workers and police to ensure that the needs and safety of all family members are dealt with appropriately.

Pilot projects in emergency rooms and health care centres are using and evaluating innovative tools and policies to better identify, assess and respond to the risks and needs of victims of family violence that enter the health care system in Alberta.

Best practice research points to the importance of developing protocols and policies that define effective working relationships within the collaborative and co-ordinated response.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, the Province of Alberta and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police "K" Division was signed in July, 2002. The MOU establishes terms of the relationship, objectives, roles, dispute resolution and security concerns. The MOU creates a context for partnering in communities across Alberta to develop community-based working agreements through interagency groups. The development of this important protocol has resulted in a commitment from the RCMP to train every RCMP member in Alberta on the subject of family violence.

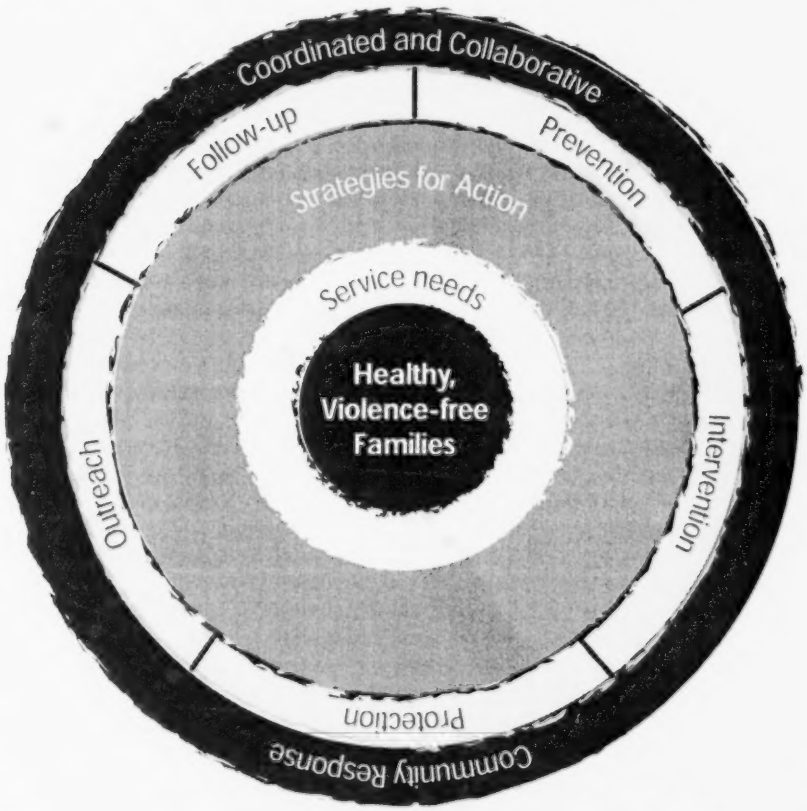
Information sharing protocols and policies are key to a successful collaborative and co-ordinated response. To help address privacy concerns, guidelines and tools have been developed by the partners in the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative, to assist delivery staff in their information sharing. These guidelines and tools were introduced through an initial series of training sessions delivered to 600 staff and stakeholders across the province. This training has helped build an understanding of privacy laws and the provisions in them that enable the sharing of needed information. This training builds confidence in government and agency staff that they are sharing information appropriately. The benefit to families is integrated, seamless service.

Building on Successes and Strengths

Building on existing partnerships between not-for-profit organizations and government mandated services, and working together to identify further action, is the core of the roundtable process. Regional workshop participants will be asked to identify effective initiatives, programs and services in their communities. Each region's effective practices and programs to prevent and respond to family violence and bullying will be showcased at the provincial roundtable.

To be effective overall, the collaborative and co-ordinated approach must encompass a wide range of programs and services. Programs and services that can inform positive change include:

- Community awareness and prevention initiatives;
- Basic safety and support for victims;
- Counselling, treatment and follow up to support the healing process for all those who are impacted by the violence and abuse;
- Enforcement that holds perpetrators accountable to families and communities; and
- A collaborative and co-ordinated forensic response.



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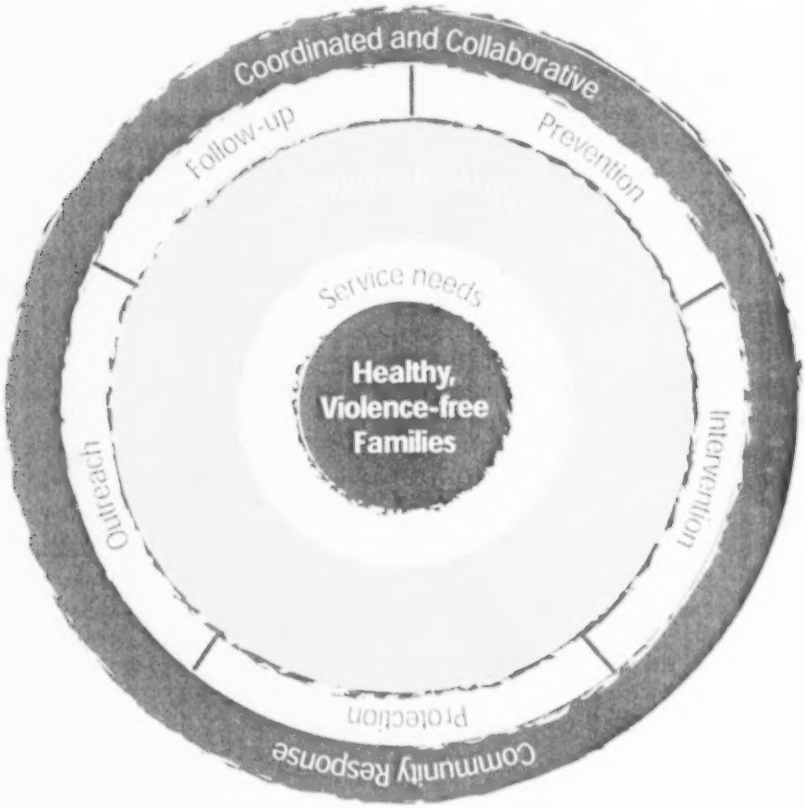

The scope of family violence and bullying services

Community Awareness

Community Involvement
Media/Communications
Training and Education
Information and Referral

Victim Services

Harm Reduction
Risk Assessment/Safety Planning
Children Exposed
Youth at Risk
Assessment, Treatment & Counseling
Adequate Resources (Quality of Life)

Offenders

Assessment and Treatment
Legal Interventions and Court Dispositions

Community Response

Citizens
Not-for-profit and Voluntary Corporate
Cross Sector / Multi-disciplinary

Mandated System Response

Child Welfare
Health Services
Income Support
Education System
Police
Legal
Criminal Court
Civil Court
Family Law
Custody and Access
Forensic
Correctional